

As you are probably aware, there has been a major humanitarian crisis taking place in the African nation of Sudan, particularly in the Western Province of Darfur. Since 2003 the Sudanese government and its armed militia, known as the Janjaweed have been engaged in a conflict with two major rebel groups, the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). This conflict has led to a government-backed campaign of violence against the non-Arab Muslim civilian population of Darfur. To date, over 2 million people have been driven from their homes and hundreds of thousands have been killed. Several hundred thousand Sudanese refugees have fled to the neighboring country of Chad and are residing in refugee camps there.

As you may know, the Sudanese government and the main rebel group, the SLA, signed a peace agreement on May 5, 2006. The JEM and another small faction of the SLA refused to sign the agreement. However, it is my hope that the signing of this agreement by the major parties in Darfur will initiate the peace that is long overdue in the region. The agreement calls for a ceasefire to take effect on May 12, 2006 and for both the government and rebel forces to disarm. Approximately 500 rebel soldiers will join the Sudanese army and the government will create a compensation fund for victims of the conflict.

Since the signing of the agreement, continued violence and riots at camps have proven that this peace agreement is tenuous. I believe it is the responsibility of the international community to step in and assist the Sudanese in implementing the peace. Approximately 7,000 African Union troops comprise the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), which is charged with monitoring the conflict. Their weak mandate and poor training make them a severely ineffective force in the region. Now that the peace agreement has been signed, it is important that the United Nations, with the support of NATO, increase their presence in the region and begin to take over operations from AMIS.

Many in Congress have consistently worked to provide much-needed food and medical assistance to the people of Darfur, but the situation remains dire. The U.N. World Food Program (WFP) recently announced that it would cut emergency food aid to Sudan in half. The U.S. has given the WFP more than 75 percent of funding thus far for Sudan with donations totaling \$188 million. Unfortunately, the WFP has only collected \$238 million in voluntary contributions out of a necessary \$746 million.

On Thursday, March 16, 2006, during consideration of H.R. 4939, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror and Hurricane Recovery, I voted for H. Amdt. 709, introduced by Rep. Michael Capuano (D-MA). This amendment increased peacekeeping funding for AMIS by \$50 million. H. Amdt. 709 passed by a vote of 213-208, bringing the total funding included in H.R. 4939 for peacekeeping operations in Darfur to \$183 million. The House of Representatives passed H.R. 4939 by a vote of 348-71. This legislation passed the Senate on May 4, 2006, by a vote of 77-21. The two bodies will now resolve the differences in a conference committee.

In addition, I am a cosponsor of several bills that seek to address the conflict in Darfur, including H.R. 3127, the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which would impose sanctions against individuals responsible for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, to

support measures for the protection of civilians and humanitarian operations and to support peace efforts in the Darfur region. I voted for H.R. 3127 when it came before the House of Representatives on April 5, 2006 and it passed by a vote of 416-3.

Please be assured that I will continue to work in Congress to provide humanitarian assistance and funding to the affected regions of Sudan. I will also continue to monitor the effectiveness of this month's peace agreement.

Again, thank you for contacting me. Please feel free to contact me again should you have further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

John W. Olver  
Member of Congress

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